

# Legal Notice Opportunity to Object Divide Travel Plan, including Big

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## **Legal Notice Opportunity to Object Divide Travel Plan, including Big Game Security Forest Plan**

**Amendment Forest Service Helena National Forest** The Responsible Official, Helena National Forest Supervisor William Avey, has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Divide Travel Plan and two associated draft Records of Decision (draft RODs), one specific to the Travel Plan and one specific to a programmatic Big Game Security Forest Plan Amendment. The Divide Travel Plan analysis evaluates alternatives to the existing designated motorized public access routes and prohibitions for wheeled motorized and over-snow vehicles on National Forest System land within the Divide Travel Planning area on the Helena Ranger District in Montana. The planning area encompasses approximately 155,500 acres of National Forest System land in Lewis and Clark and Powell counties. The Divide Travel Plan FEIS considered five alternatives in detail - the No Action and four action alternatives. Alternative 1 is the No Action alternative, which provides a baseline for comparing the magnitude of environmental effects of the action alternatives. Alternative 2 was the proposed action presented to the public during the 2008 scoping period. This alternative was developed using the current Forest Transportation System maps, information from the 2004 Helena Roads Analysis, field verification and public input. Alternative 3 was developed in response to public input regarding wildlife security issues, non-motorized uses and general resource concerns relative to erosion and sedimentation from road conditions. Alternative 4 was developed as a result of public comments. This alternative addresses both social and resource concerns identified by the public. Alternative 5, the preferred alternative, was developed in response to public comment and field reviews and is designed to increase motorized loop trail opportunities and reduce the short spur and redundant parallel routes. The Divide Travel Plan draft ROD identifies the selection of Travel Plan Alternative 5 modified. This draft decision would result in changes to the existing motorized route system. It includes closing some roads and trails that are currently open to motorized use and opening some roads and trails for motorized use that are currently closed. It also includes a limited number of new trails to connect existing routes. Site specific analysis will occur following this decision to address ground disturbing activities necessary for implementation. This draft decision designates approximately 62 miles of National Forest System Trail (NFST) open to vehicles 50 inches in width or less, approximately 259 miles of National Forest System Road (NFSR) open to highway-legal vehicles, approximately 86,600 acres of area open to over-snow motorized vehicles December 2nd to May 15th, approximately 183 miles of NFSR open to over-snow motorized vehicles December 2nd to May 15th, parking up to 30 feet and dispersed camping up to 70 feet from the edge of designated routes. Select dispersed campsites that are greater than 70 feet from a designated route will remain open for dispersed camping and parking associated with dispersed camping will be shown on the alternative 5 MVUM. Public use of a motor

vehicle other than in accordance with those designations would be prohibited as per 36 CFR 261.13. The draft ROD for the Big Game Security Forest Plan Amendment for the Divide Travel Planning Area documents the selection of Big Game Security Forest Plan Amendment Alternative B. Alternative B would replace the existing big game security standard 4(a) in the Forest Plan with a new standard. This new standard would only apply to National Forest System lands within those portions of an elk herd unit within the Helena National Forest, Helena Ranger District boundary. The FEIS, maps, appendices, and both draft RODs are also posted on the Helena National Forest website. They can be accessed at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/helena/landmanagement/projects>. Printed copies are available at the Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office at 2880 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT, 59602. Additional information can be obtained from Heather DeGeest, Helena District Ranger at 406-449-5201. The Divide Travel Plan FEIS draft decision is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. The Big Game Security Forest Plan Amendment draft decision is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR Part 219, subpart B. **How to file an Objection and Timeframe.** Objections on the Divide travel plan and the programmatic Forest Plan amendment will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding these planning efforts during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with §218.5(a) and 219.53(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding these planning efforts unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities. Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, express delivery, or messenger service to: Objection Reviewing Officer, USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807; FAX to (406) 329-3411; email to [appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us); or by hand-delivery (Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays at USDA Forest Service, 200 East Broadway, Missoula, MT 59807. An automated response will confirm the electronic objection has been received. Electronic objections must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF). The subject line for electronic objections should contain the name of the plan or plan amendment being objected to. Objections on the Divide Travel Plan FEIS draft Decision must be submitted within 45 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Helena Independent Record. Objections on both the programmatic plan amendment to the Big Game Security Forest standard 4a will be accepted for an additional 15 days, so must be submitted within 60 calendar days following this notice in the Helena Independent Record. The publication date in the Helena Independent Record (newspaper of record) is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection. It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9 and 219.56. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection. The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d) and 219.54(c) and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b) and 219.54(b). All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process. At a minimum, an objection must meet minimum requirements described in 36 CFR 218.8(d) for the Divide Travel Plan and minimum requirements described in 36 CFR 219.54(c) for the programmatic Big Game Security Forest Plan amendment. These include: 1) The objector's name and address, with a telephone number, if available; 2) a

signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for Email may be filed with the objection), 3) when multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request); 4) the name of the proposed plan or plan amendment, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name(s) of the National Forest(s) and/or Ranger District(s) on which the proposed plan or plan amendment will be implemented; 5) a description of those aspects of the proposed plan or plan amendment addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed plan or plan amendment if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; and supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and 6) a statement that demonstrates connection between prior specific written comments on the particular proposed plan, plan amendment or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunity for formal comment. April 23, 2015 **MNAXLP**  
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